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ABSTRACT

The validity of an instrument which purports to measure followers' perceptions of a leader's power base usages, the Richardson Power Profile (RPP), was investigated. Also compared were the perceptions of power base usage derived by concurrently administering two instruments, the RPP and the Power Perception Profile--Perception of Other. Teachers and administrators were the subjects of this study; intraindividual stability of perceptions reported across the two instruments, irrespective of role, were studied. Both instruments differed in format (normative and ipsative). Results suggest that the RPP is a reasonably valid measure of power base usage. Also concluded was the notion that ipsative or quasi-ipsative formats should only be employed when social desirability or other factors severely distort response patterns, and although these factors influence self-perceptions of power base usage, the impacts on perceptions of others are probably minimal. (GK)

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MEASURING POWER ORIENTATIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract

The linkage between effective school administration and power use has been well established in anecdotal, theory-related, and empirical literature. Situational leadership theory has recently been extended to include a deliniation of seven power bases. Although this theoretical development is important, ultimately the theory's utility depends upon our ability to measure the theory's constructs. This study investigated the measurement characteristics of the Power Perception Profile and a similar but non-ipsative instrument. The results suggest that the Power Perception Profile must be used with some caution.

The linkage between power use and effective school administration has long been recognized. For example, Hightower (1976, pp. 46-47) offered the following tongue-in-cheek advise to neophyte administrators:

> Never neglect the use of small rewards and punishments; you can extract a lot of clout through their wise management. Do not forget parking space assignments, extra duty assignments, chaperoning assignments, and club sponsorship assignments as possible measures of rewarding or punishing teachers.

Theoreticians have discussed the linkage between power use and leadership effectiveness in less tongue-in-cheek fashion. As McClelland (1970, p. 31) notes, "leadership and power appear as two closely related concepts, and if we want to understand better effective leadership, we may begin by studying the power motive in thought and action." Finally, researchers too have noted a linkage between power use and the effectiveness of school principals. For example, Mowday (1978, p. 137) found that "the liklihood of using manipulation as a method of influence was found to differentiate principals rated high in influence effectiveness from principals rated low, with high effectiveness principals indicating they were more likely to use manipulation."

Recent studies into the nature of the power-leadership linkage have benefited from improved grounding in theory. The most noteworthy contribution in this regard has been offered by Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1979). They have suggested that administrators may rely upon some combination of seven

power bases when exercising influence. Five of the power bases were originally conceptualized by French and Raven (1959):

1. reward power has its basis in "the ability to reward" (p. 157);
2. coercive power involves the ability to punish (pp. 157-158);
3. legitimate power reflects an individual's feeling that he or she "ought" to allow influence to be exerted (pp. 158-161);
4. referent power involves compliance so that a feeling of "oneness" or "identity" with another is not threatened (pp. 161-163); and
5. expert power stems from a perception that an administrator possesses unique insight or expertise (pp. 163-164).

Raven and Kruglanski (1975, p. 73) subsequently identified a sixth power base, information power, which is derived "by providing information not previously available." Finally, Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer (1979, p. 419) identified a seventh power base, connection power, which "induces compliance from others because they try to gain favor or avoid disfavor of the powerful connection." Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer have also suggested that the power bases can be organized into a definite heirarchy corresponding to the maturity of an organization's followers; different forms of power should be used depending upon the group's willingness to accept responsibility, ability to set high but attainable goals, and the group's experience and education.

Of course, the utility of this theory is contingent upon our ability to measure its constructs. This study was conducted to investigate the validity of an instrument which

purports to measure followers' perceptions of a leader's power base usages, the Richardson Power Profile (RPP), and to compare perceptions of power base usage derived by concurrently administering two instruments, the RPP and the Power Perception Profile--Perception of Other (Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979).

Method

The subjects in the study were 128 educators. This sample included 90 teachers and 38 administrators. Of course, this proportion is somewhat arbitrary since the study primarily investigated intra-individual stability of perceptions reported across two instruments, irrespective of role. The subjects completed the Richardson Power Profile (RPP), an instrument developed for the purposes of this study, and the Hersey and Natemeyer (1979) instrument. Both instruments measure perceptions of power base usage, but differ fundamentally in their formats.

The RPP consists of 41 randomly ordered items. Subjects are asked to rate how well each item describes how a particular administrator exercises influence. Subjects repond by marking through a disagree-agree continuum (Thompson, 1981) associated with each item. Since the responses to a given item do not constrain responses to other items the response format is considered normative (Cattell, 1944).

The Hersey and Natemeyer (1979) instrument consists of 21 forced-choice pairs of seven reasons given by people for doing things that a leader wants them to do. Respondents are asked to allocate three points between the two alternatives in each pair of reasons. Since the response to one item in a pair constrains point allocation to the remaining item in a given pair the response format of the instrument is ipsative or quasi-ipsative (Cattell, 1944). These two instrument formats, i.e., normative and ipsative, each have both advantages and disadvantages.

Results

The first question posed in the study asked whether the RPP is valid. This question was addressed by factor analyzing the RPP data. Seven factors accounting for 61.9% of the variance of the 41 items were extracted from the interitem correlation matrix and rotated to the varimax criterion. The actual results were then empirically compared to theoretically expected results by computing factor adequacy coefficients (Pitts & Thompson, 1980). The coefficients for the seven factors were respectively .83, .93, .99, .99, .99, .88, and .86.

The second question posed in the study asked whether RPP results are comparable to the results generated by the Hersey and Natemeyer (1979) instrument. This question was addressed by calculating correlations between factor scores from the RPP

and the scale scores from the Hersey and Natemeyer instrument. These correlations are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Discussion

These results suggest that the Richardson Power Profile (RPP) is a reasonably valid measure of perceptions of power base usage. Some items were correlated with factors the items were not presumed to measure. However, this is not entirely unexpected, since the power bases may not be perfectly uncorrelated. As Martin (1978, p. 52) notes, "it appears that these forms of power, however, are not independent."

The convergent validity coefficients presented in Table 1 are discouraging. For example, even the largest correlation indicates that the expertise scales from the two instruments share only about half of their variance (r squared = .518). This finding is not totally unexpected, however, since ipsative measures frequently produce results with some troublesome properties. As Kerlinger (1973, p. 509, Kerlinger's emphasis) explains, "the important limitation on ipsative procedures is that, strictly speaking, the usual statistics are not applicable, since such statistics depend upon assumptions that ipsative procedures systematically violate. Moreover, the ipsative procedure produces spurious negative correlations between items."

The use of only seven reasons on the Hersey-Natemeyer instrument is also a matter of some concern. This use presumes that one item per power base is sufficient to capture the essence of each base. The format of the instrument is also somewhat surprising since the instrument's brevity suggests that the instrument's intended primary use is applied rather than research. However, as Nunnally (1967, p. 485) explains, "another problem with forced-choice inventories relates to public relations, particularly in applied settings. People tend to feel 'trapped' by forced-choice inventories, and in many cases rightly so." Generally ipsative or quasi-ipsative formats should only be employed when social desirability or other factors severely distort response patterns (McCollum & Thompson, 1980), and although these factors influence self-perceptions of power base usage (McClelland, 1970, p. 32), the impacts on perceptions of others are probably minimal. Of course these criticisms must be tempered with an acknowledgment that the Hersey-Natemeyer instrument is not "purely" ipsative, since respondents can at least allocate either zero, one or two points to each item in an item pair. The exact consequences of this lattitude remain to be explored in future research.

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Table 1

Inter-Scale Correlations

	Reward	Coercive	Legitimate	Referent	Expert	Information	Connection
Reward	.26**	.06	-.17*	-.02	-.07	-.10	.06
Coercive	.27**	.33**	.09	-.19*	-.26**	-.20*	.03
Legitimate	-.06	-.13	.23**	.02	-.03	.11	-.05
Referent	-.10	-.07	-.03	.30**	.01	-.15*	-.04
Expert	-.30**	-.59**	-.22**	.50**	.72**	-.06	-.30**
Information	-.08	-.12	.01	-.02	.05	.22**	-.02
Connection	.02	.10	-.24**	-.21**	-.21**	.00	.52**

Note. Convergent validity coefficients on the diagonal.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$